



# Chapter 3

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**Chuck Smith Introduction:**The events in this chapter foreshadow the resistance of the Jews to the worship of the Antichrist during the coming Great Tribulation period. King Nebuchadnezzar is a symbol of the Antichrist. The three Hebrew men that God protected in the furnace represent the 144,000 Jews God will seal and protect during the Tribulation. The golden image represents the image of the Antichrist that will be set up in the rebuilt Jewish temple. The fiery furnace represents the Great Tribulation. Daniel represents the Church, which will not be around during the Great Tribulation .<sup>1</sup>

Between the vision of Nebuchadnezzar in the second chapter and that of Daniel in the seventh, four narratives of Daniels and his friends' personal history are introduced. As the second and seventh chapters go together, so chapters the third and sixth chapters (the deliverance from the lions' den), and the fourth and fifth chapters. Of these last two pairs, the former shows God's nearness to save His saints when faithful to Him, at the very time they seem to be crushed by the world power. The second pair shows, in the case of the two kings of the first monarchy, how God can suddenly humble the world power in the height of its insolence. The latter advances from mere self-glorification, in the fourth chapter, to open opposition to God in the fifth. Nebuchadnezzar demands homage to be paid to his image (Da 3:1–6), and boasts of his power (Da 4:1–18). But Belshazzar goes further, blaspheming God by polluting His holy vessels. There is a similar progression in the conduct of God's people. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego refuse *positive* homage to the image of the world power (Da 3:12); Daniel will not yield it even a *negative* homage, by omitting for a time the worship of God (Da 6:10). Jehovah's power manifested for the saints against the world in individual histories (the third through sixth chapters) is exhibited in the second and seventh chapters, in world-wide prophetic pictures; the former heightening the effect of the latter. The miracles wrought in behalf of Daniel and his friends were a manifestation of God's glory in Daniel's person, as the representative of the theocracy before the Babylonian king, who deemed himself almighty, at a time when God could not manifest it in His people as a body. They tended also to secure, by their impressive character, that respect for the covenant-people on the part of the heathen powers which issued in Cyrus' decree, not only restoring the Jews, but ascribing honor to the God of heaven, and commanding the building of the temple (Ezr 1:1–4) [AUBERLEN].<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Chuck Smith Sermon Notes, Calvary Chapel, Costa Mesa, California

<sup>2</sup>Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Da 3:1). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

## **Daniel 3:1**

**Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.**



All Gold: 6 x 60 cubits high. “Dura” = “enclosed by a wall”; 6 miles SE of Babylon.

Maybe 18-23 years later? Traditions and children had grown.  
6 = 7 - 1 = number of man. 6th day of Genesis: man created;  
Goliath measured in 6's; 1 Sam 17:4-7;  
6 steps for Solomon's throne;  
6 + 1: Menorah. In our society, Man is deified = Humanism.  
Ultimate: Rev 13.

The king seems to have made the image of gold in defiance of the prophecy that his kingdom would one day fall to the Medo-Persian empire.

Israel was commanded to serve God alone, and thus all idols were forbidden (Deuteronomy 5:7-10; 6:14-15). When the Israelites defeated their enemies and took the images of their gods, they were to destroy them. They were not to keep them even for the value of their metals (Deuteronomy 7:25-26). God specifically forbade the Israelites to avoid satisfying their curiosity about how the idols were used:

**(Deut. 12:29-31)** *“When the Lord your God cuts off before you the nations which you are going in to dispossess, and you dispossess them and dwell in their land, beware that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, ‘How do these nations serve their gods, that I also may do likewise?’ You shall not behave thus toward the Lord your God, for every abominable act which the Lord hates they have done for their gods; for they even burn their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods”.*

I believe Daniel avoided giving more information about the king's image in obedience to this command. To give any more information was to provide what could become a snare to the reader. Think of it. If you knew more about the king's image, would you not attempt to understand how this idol was to be worshipped? Daniel's silence concerning the details of this idol was deliberate and instructive.

We are told only that king Nebuchadnezzar had an image constructed 90 feet high and 9 feet wide, to which the entire nation was commanded to bow down. This was not merely an act of respect toward the king, but an act of worship.<sup>3</sup> Daniel's three young Hebrew friends found this something they neither could nor would do, even on penalty of death.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The term worship is employed 11 times in chapter 3 in reference to the king's image.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Deffinbaugh, deffinbaugh@bible.org, Biblical Studies Press, 1995

**Van Impe:** Imagine the sight of a golden image of Nebuchadnezzar that was ninety feet high (sixty cubits) and nine feet wide (six cubits in all, a cubit being approximately eighteen inches), erected on the plain of Dura. While the 'golden image may simply have appeared to be little more than a massive statue, it actually holds great prophetic meaning and is yet another end-time mystery about to be unsealed.

For example, the numbers 66 come together here: the number of man (sixty cubits high) and six cubits wide, resembling the number of the Antichrist in Revelation 13:16—18 (six cubits). This gives us a reference to the time when the Antichrist comes into power and his false prophet sets up an image of his likeness in the temple. Revelation 13:15 says,

*"And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed."*

*Faucet's Bible Dictionary Encyclopedia* reports that the archaeologist Opert once journeyed to present day Iraq—the area of biblical Babylon—and excavated what most evangelical scholars believe is the pedestal on which Nebuchadnezzar's great image had been placed—proving this biblical event really happened! Some believe the gold statue may have been built to honor Nebuchadnezzar's deceased father, Nabopolassar. Others suggest it was erected to appease Bel or Marduk—the revered pagan gods of Babylon. More likely, the image was a representation of the king himself.

Nebuchadnezzar had a flair for publicity, and he knew where to position the gigantic statue so that no one could miss seeing it. While Babylon was a skyscraper city of its day, the plain of Dura was a huge mound of earth, about six miles southeast of Babylon, probably a walled area that Nebuchadnezzar could have easily used as a focal point to stage an event of this enormity.

Anything constructed in that area would be seen for miles around. Its strategic position allowed for thousands of people to descend on the area at once, thus giving the king a venue for a mass rally where loyal supporters could bow and pay their homage to the king. This seemed to be a carefully planned "photo op" for Nebuchadnezzar and an event which all the chief officers of the land were commanded to attend—including Daniel's three friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego.<sup>5</sup>

It is not likely that this image was all of gold; for this would have required more of this precious metal than the whole province of Babylon could produce; for as I suppose the sixty cubits apply to the perpendicular altitude, so I take it for granted that the six cubits intend the diameter. Now a column of gold of this height in diameter, upon the supposition that the pillar was circular, contains five thousand seven hundred and twenty-five and a half cubic feet; and as there are nineteen thousand avoirdupois ounces in a cubic foot, the weight of the whole pillar would be eight million two hundred and sixty-two thousand eight hundred and six pounds, ten ounces of gold.<sup>6</sup>

There is a discernible link between Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2 and the image he made in Daniel 3. It seems that Nebuchadnezzar deliberately made an *entire* statue of

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<sup>5</sup> A Message of Hope from Dr. Jack Van Impe, Commentary on The Book of Daniel, Van Impe

<sup>6</sup> Adam Clarke's Commentary

gold, saying that the day of his reign and authority would never end - in contradiction to God's declared plan.<sup>7</sup>

**Walvoord:** Although Nebuchadnezzar had tremendous wealth and could conceivably have erected this image of solid gold, it is probable that it was made of wood overlaid with gold as was customary. Montgomery observes, "Its construction of gold has also given rise to extensive argument, with charge of absurdity on one side, e.g. JDMich [J.D. Michaelis], with defense based on the fabulous riches of the East on the other. But Herodotus' statements about the golden idols in Babylon afford sufficient background. (Cf. Pliny's account of an all-gold image of Anaitis, which was looted by Antony, Hist. nat., xxxiii, 24.) The gold consisted in overlaid plates, for which we possess not only abundant Classical evidence ... but also that of the Bible. The "golden altar" (Ex 39:38) was actually wood overlaid with gold (Ex 37:25-26). Idols overlaid with gold are mentioned in Isaiah 40:19 and Isaiah 41:7. Jeremiah describes the same process (Jer 10:3-9). The appearance of the image, however, was much the same as if it were solid gold."<sup>8</sup>

### **Daniel 3:2**

**Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather together the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.**

Officials (Aramaic, Greek): **princes**: Arabian *'ahashdarpan*, Greek *satrap*; chief representative or administrator of king; **governors**, *segan*, prefect, military commanders; **captains**, *peha*, governor (civil); **judges**, *adargazar*, counsellor, arbitrator; **treasurers**, *qedabar*, treasurer, **counsellors**, *detabar*, lawyers; **sheriffs**, *tiptay*, magistrates, judge.

#### **Eight main classes gathered to dedication (Dake):**

1. Princes: satraps or privy counselors who had access to the king at all times (Daniel 3:2-3,27; Daniel 6:1-7)
2. Governors: lieutenants, viceroys, nobles of the various provinces (Daniel 2:48; Daniel 3:2-3,27; Daniel 6:7)
3. Captains: pashas; deputy rulers of outlying provinces (Daniel 3:2-3,27; Daniel 6:7) or leaders of armies (1 Kings 20:24; Jeremiah 51:23,28,57; Ezekiel 23:6,12,23)
4. Judges: assistants to the king in making laws (Daniel 3:2)
5. Treasurers: those in charge of the treasure houses (Daniel 3:2-3)
6. Counselors: lawyers; judges (Daniel 3:2-3)
7. Sheriffs: supreme masters; civil magistrates (Daniel 3:2-3)
8. Rulers of provinces: state and civil officers and various wise men (Daniel 3:2-3)<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.enduringword.com/commentaries/2703.htm>

<sup>8</sup> Daniel, The key to Prophetic Revelation, A Commentary by John F. Walvoord, Moody Press, Chicago

<sup>9</sup> Dake's Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

**Poole:** This great statue, whether Nebuchadnezzar's own, or Bel, or any other of his gods, see Da 3:14, must be solemnly dedicated, and therefore all the peers of the realm are called to it; but whether these ranks of men and officers are truly rendered from the Chaldee words is hard to determine, and not worth disputing; etymologists differ in it: this only is material, that the heads of all that vast empire were summoned, of several nations and languages, to testify their conformity to the emperor's will, and thereby give assurance of obliging the people under them to the same obedience, i.e. to the same idolatrous worship.

It was the manner of the heathen to consecrate their idol before they worshipped it, and herein, as in many other, Satan imitated the Jews, and their temple dedication, Joh 10:22: they held a feast. The popish church do the like, when they dedicate material temples to particular saints, with solemnity and jollity, from whence come the feasts of wakes and revels to this day.<sup>10</sup>

**Hocking:** Notice that the government is well organized. They sent out invitations. This is similar to what will follow in the great kingdom of Persia. The difference is that Nebuchadnezzar is the sole power. Under Persia, the nobles and the princes are in power. We learned earlier that Persia was inferior to Babylon primarily in that sense. Nebuchadnezzar's word was law. Whatever he said went. The government was well organized and he called all the officials of all the provinces together.

Babylon was divided up in ancient times in a similar manner as it is divided up today. Saddam Hussein treated Kuwait just as though it were one of his Provinces. Just so Nebuchadnezzar treated all the provinces in his day.

An interesting thing to me is the size of the image. A lot of people attack the Book of Daniel and want to believe that it was written much later, after the breakup of the Roman Empire of Alexander the Great. As I look at this, however, I find a lot of historical evidence that it is correctly placed (as the Bible says) in the sixth century B.C. One reason I think this is the size of the image. Notice that it is ninety feet high by nine feet thick. A cubit is about a foot and a half. That estimate would be about 4,320 cubic feet of gold! That's a lot of gold. They used it profusely. The size of the image tells us that the Babylonians did not use the Greek system of ten which we still use in our multiplication tables. The Babylonian system was built on sixes. How interesting then to find the image sixty cubits high and six cubits thick.

This is one big image, but the Colossus of Rhodes was bigger. So the fact of an image this size in the ancient world is not a surprise. Nebuchadnezzar took notice of the head of gold in the image that Daniel described, but he forgot all about the nations that were coming and make his image totally out of gold. One writer says that every pagan ruler in a totalitarian society desires to be known this way – supreme, ruling over all. Nebuchadnezzar was making an image to himself. What was this an image of? Was it the image Daniel described? I don't think so. He designed it to look like himself and he wanted everybody to worship that image. So comes the demand for worship. This is man's continual mistake – worshipping the efforts of his own hands with man at the center of it, expecting people to worship him.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Matthew Poole's Commentary

<sup>11</sup> Daniel, Volume I, His Prominence and Prosperity, by David Hocking, Promise Publishing, Orange CA

### **Daniel 3:3**

**Then the princes, the governors, and captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, were gathered together unto the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.**

**stood before the image**—in an attitude of devotion. Whatever the king approved of, they all approve of. There is no stability of principle in the ungodly.<sup>12</sup>

In the plains of Dura, where great multitudes might easily be gathered, and behold it lifted up on high, conspicuous to all; they beheld it with admiration, ready to adore it, in obedience to the king's will and pleasure, for whatsoever pleased him pleased them, walking willingly after the commandment, as Jeroboam by his calves made Israel to sin. Heathenish and profane men are unstable as water, and blown any way by every wind of doctrine, suitable to their princes and to their own lusts. If the king had commanded idols to be broken and burnt, and the worship of the true God to be set up, this people would not have been so forward in their conformity, because men are generally more inclined to false worship than true.<sup>13</sup>

### **Daniel 3:4**

**Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages,**

**[herald cried aloud]** Heralds were employed by kings to announce decrees, and to proclaim their coming (Malachi 3:1; Isaiah 40:3). Otherwise they were used to proclaim the opening of games, the name and country of the contestants, and the rules of the contest.

### **Daniel 3:5**

**That at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up:**

**[cornet]** A horn with a deep hollow sound, as well as one with a shrill and piercing tone.

**[flute]** A wind instrument with a strong and shrill sound.

**[harp]** A stringed instrument.

**[sackbut]** Another type of harp.

**[psaltery]** Another stringed instrument.

**[dulcimer]** Perhaps a tambourine or tomtom drum.

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<sup>12</sup>Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Da 3:3). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

<sup>13</sup>Matthew Poole's Commentary

**Ye fall down and worship:** mark, all that is required of them is only a gesture of worship, without oral profession. The pomp and equipage, the solemn sound of the music, and the strict command, was enough to induce them to stoop and fall down to it. This is one of Satan's great engines to draw the world from God's pure worship, and the simplicity that is in Christ, dazzling men's eyes, and bewitching them with a gaudy, whorish dress of idolatrous service, as ye see in this example, and Re 17:4,5; all which ariseth merely from hence, because men do not or will not see that God's worship is wholly spiritual, and most beautiful and glorious as such, 2Co 3:7 to the end; by this it excels all pagan, Jewish, and antichristian worship, all which is human, bodily, uncommanded of God, therefore displeasing and provoking, unprofitable, insnaring, and destructive.<sup>14</sup>

**Hocking:** Nebuchadnezzar had a special announcement made about the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery. The Babylonians loved music. In the celebrations of the rebuilt city that Saddam Hussein had, to which he invited guests from all over the world in 1988-89, he did exactly the same thing. He had all of these instruments (ancient instruments) being played, big processions and big spectacular programs to display the glory of rebuilt Babylon. He tried to duplicate what Nebuchadnezzar did.<sup>15</sup>

### **Daniel 3:6**

**And whoso falleth not down and worshipping shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.**

If you follow “heavy metal” music, this “hot” music group gives “Metallica” a whole new meaning! The Christian equivalent would be “Deliverance,” and that is, after all, what happens with Christ in the picture, as the three young men soon discover!

Execution Furnace: Examples in N. Iraq: brick furnaces the size of a city block; pitch, sulfur, bellows. CBS: Dr. Ron Charles (designed for Owens Corning Corporation) sees it as a two-story structure, 32 ft. high, 20 ft inside the chamber. Backdraft killed seven? Cold spots?

[Enforced state religion: Rev 13:4-15; 14:9-11; 19:20; 20:4; 2 Thess 2:4.]

**[fiery furnace]** Tradition says that Abraham was cast into such a furnace by this idolatrous people because he would not worship their idols.<sup>16</sup>

**Shall the same hour**—This is the first place in the Old Testament where we find the division of time into hours. The Greeks say that Anaximander was the inventor. He had it probably from the Chaldeans, among whom this division was in use long before Anaximander was born.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Matthew Poole's Commentary

<sup>15</sup> Daniel, Volume I, His Prominence and Prosperity, by David Hocking, Promise Publishing, Orange CA

<sup>16</sup> Dake's Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

<sup>17</sup> Adam Clarke's Commentary



### **Daniel 3:7**

**Therefore at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of music, all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down *and* worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.**

### **Daniel 3:8**

**Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near, and accused the Jews.**

[Jews] Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego (Daniel 3:12). For some unknown reason, Daniel and other Jews were left unnoticed or they were not present at this dedication.

### **Daniel 3:9**

**They spake and said to the king Nebuchadnezzar, O king, live for ever.**

### **Daniel 3:10**

**Thou, O king, hast made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image:**

### **Daniel 3:11**

**And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, *that* he should be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.**

**Van Impe:** Here we catch a glimpse of Nebuchadnezzar's political acumen and get a dramatic preview of the activities of the Antichrist to come. The king knew he had to keep certain conquered peoples under his thumb at all times, and what better vehicle than native religion to promote the power of the state? Nebuchadnezzar knew that whatever officials saw that day on the plain of Dura, they would take back to those captives under their jurisdiction.

Apparently Daniel was somewhere else in the realm on business for the king, since he was not present at the unveiling of the golden image. In fact, Daniel is not even mentioned in this chapter. For the first time in our story, his three friends are on their own. But because Daniel had exerted such great moral and spiritual influence on his companions, compromise with foreign gods was out of the question.

However, these three faithful Hebrews would pay a terrible price for not bowing to the image. King Nebuchadnezzar would try to have them killed, picturing an approaching day when the Antichrist carries out the same penalty on those who refuse to bow to his image and reject his mark, 666. At first reading this passage simply appears to be a provocative piece of biblical history. Closer observation, however, tells us that this story speaks to where you and I are today—and where we are quickly headed.

For instance, during the Tribulation hour, the Antichrist will make an image of himself (Revelation 13:15), and anyone who will not worship that image will be killed, even as those who refused to bow to the image of Nebuchadnezzar were threatened with destruction in a furnace of fire. The only difference between the two events is magnitude. The Tribulation hour will be a time when fire engulfs the earth. Revelation 8:7 says,

*"And the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up."*

Revelation 9:18 tells us:

*"By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone."*

Accompanying all this mayhem will be the Antichrist, who says, "If you don't worship me and my image, you're going to die." Revelation 20:4 says,

*"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image."*

Matthew 25:31—46, however, declares that there will be multitudes who will survive the seven-year period without taking the number. I'm not sure how, but they will persevere, just as the three Hebrew children ultimately survived their trial by fire.<sup>18</sup>

### **Daniel 3:12**

**There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.**

The counselors of the king, which would include the Chaldeans, may have been the next to bow in worship. The Chaldeans would have noted the failure of the three to fall down rather than the king or the other political leaders. They, after all, were on their faces before the idol. How could they look about for those who did not bow down?<sup>19</sup>

The charge made against the three Hebrews was three-fold:

- They showed disregard for the king's authority.
- They did not serve his gods.
- They would not bow down to the image.

The Chaldeans were men who owed their lives to Daniel and his friends. Had Daniel not revealed the king's dream and its meaning to Nebuchadnezzar, all of the wise men of the land would have been put to death. Now, they show their gratitude by pointing out the disobedience of the three Hebrews to the king.

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<sup>18</sup> A Message of Hope from Dr. Jack Van Impe, Commentary on The Book of Daniel, Van Impe

<sup>19</sup> None of the three Hebrews tried to call attention to their civil disobedience in refusing to bow down to the golden image. They were not trying to make an issue of this matter, but only being obedient to their faith and to the Law as quietly and inconspicuously as possible. Had the Chaldeans not made an issue of their failure to fall down, there would have been no confrontation.

The Chaldeans' opposition is not difficult to understand, given the goal of Nebuchadnezzar to use foreigners as a part of his administration. The Chaldeans were the "natives" of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar himself was a Chaldean. Daniel and his three friends were outsiders, yet they had higher positions in Nebuchadnezzar's administration than the Chaldeans. The attack on the three Hebrews was an attack "against the Jews" (3:8).<sup>20</sup>

While the Chaldeans did not devise a scheme to bring about the demise of the three Hebrews (as others would later do with Daniel in chapter 6), they certainly took advantage of the situation. They apparently interrupted the ceremony, reporting to Nebuchadnezzar that these three Jews refused to bow down. When the king stopped the ceremony, everyone must have looked on with great interest to see how the matter would be handled and to see if the three Hebrews would buckle under to the king's orders.<sup>21</sup>

### **Van Impe: Nebuchadnezzar—Picture of the Antichrist**

So the statue on the plain of Dura was more than just an image of a king. It graphically represented the king's continued rebellion against God—just as the Antichrist will become the definition of rebellion against the Almighty. The image also indicated that the king was egocentric, offering his image to the people as a symbol of self-deification. Again, there are Antichrist implications (Daniel 11:36).

Politically, Nebuchadnezzar needed a strong, unifying force to continue to bring together the disparate tribes and nations that fell to the power of Babylon. In short, Nebuchadnezzar's purpose was to institute a totalitarian regime, and this was one way to galvanize the people's attention and allegiance. What better description can we find in Scripture of the political prowess of the Antichrist to come!

Not surprisingly, when the word went out that this was "bow down" time, the officials, governors, and whoever else had managed to get to Dura that day paid obeisance to the king right on cue. Imagine the scene. Nebuchadnezzar was so fully in control of this grand event that he even had it choreographed. When the conductor of this desert orchestra of cornets, flutes, harps, sackbuts (stringed instruments), psalteries, and dulcimers lowered his baton, it was time to fall to one's knees. And that's what the masses did: They looked at the great statue, and they fell down to worship. Why not? To remain standing in defiance of the king's order would mean certain death in a fiery furnace.<sup>22</sup>

We don't know if other Jews refused to fall down and worship the image, but these three were singled out as public examples. Why didn't the three men just bow to the image and tell God that they didn't mean it? They had determined never to worship another god, and they courageously took their stand. As a result, they were condemned and led away to be executed. The men did not know whether they would be delivered from the fire; all they knew was that they would not fall down and worship an idol. Are you ready to take a stand for God no matter what? When you stand for God, you will stand out. It may be

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<sup>20</sup> This linking of the three friends of Daniel with the Jews was to work in favor of the Jews, as we shall soon see.

<sup>21</sup> Robert Deffinbaugh, [deffinbaugh@bible.org](mailto:deffinbaugh@bible.org), Biblical Studies Press, 1995

<sup>22</sup> A Message of Hope from Dr. Jack Van Impe, Commentary on The Book of Daniel, Van Impe

painful, and it may not always have a happy ending. Be prepared to say, “If he rescues me, or if he doesn’t, I will serve only God.”<sup>23</sup>

### **Daniel 3:13**

**Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Then they brought these men before the king.**

*Bowing before an image expressly prohibited in the Torah: Ex 20:4,5; Lev 26:1; Deut 16:22.*

- **Shadrach**, “illuminated by the Sun God”  
– *Hananiah*, “Beloved of the Lord”
- **Meshach**, “Who is like unto the Moon God”  
– *Mishael*, “Who is God”
- **Abed-nego**, Servant of Nego (“Shining Fire”)  
– *Azariah*, “The Lord is my help”

CBS Special: Five-sided clay prism found in Babylon, now on display at the Istanbul Museum: lists grouped by titles: Ha-nu-nu, Chief of the Royal Merchants, a variation of Hananiah, or **Shadrach**; Mushalemarduk:(less marduk) = **Meshach**. Ardi-nabu, Secretary to the Crown Prince; an alternative form of **Abed-Nego**.

**[Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego]** Nebuchadnezzar and Jonah (Jonah 4:1-9) are outstanding examples of being hasty and angry. Such is forbidden in Scripture (Eccles. 7:9; Titus 1:7; cp. Proverbs 14:17; Proverbs 22:24; Proverbs 29:22; Matthew 5:22; Ephes. 4:26).

### **Daniel 3:14**

**Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, *Is it true*, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?**

### **Daniel 3:15**

**Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; *well*: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who *is* that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?**

The king, who had appointed these men to their high positions, probably valued their service. Realizing his reputation was at stake, he gave them, before all present, a second

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<sup>23</sup> Life Application Notes

chance. He would instruct the orchestra to play once more, and if they bowed down, the matter would be forgotten.

What the king said next proves to be the most significant statement to come from his lips: “What god is there who can deliver you out of my hands?”

He was soon to find out. Like Pharaoh of old, he would learn that the God of Israel is to be heard and obeyed; the God of Israel is able to deliver His people.

### **Daniel 3:16**

**Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we *are* not careful to answer thee in this matter.**

**[we are not careful to answer thee in this matter]** Note how carefully they answered the king and how confident they were that their God was able to deliver them from the king. Whether He would or would not though, one thing was made clear: they would not serve idols or bow down in worship to the image (Daniel 3:16-18).<sup>24</sup>

### **Daniel 3:17**

**If it be *so*, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver *us* out of thine hand, O king.**

#### **Van Impe: Spiritual Fortitude**

Mission accomplished. When Nebuchadnezzar heard of the acts of the rebellious young Jews, he flew into one of his typical rages, demanding that these alleged traitors be brought before him. But to his credit—and perhaps the first crack in Nebuchadnezzar’s becoming more compliant—he asked Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego if they’d really done this dastardly deed, perhaps secretly hoping the report was not true.

King Nebuchadnezzar didn’t take the Chaldean’s word at face value. He left the door open for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego to take the trip out to the plain of Dura again and make amends for their unpatriotic actions—or lack of action. All they would have to do would be drop to their knees when the desert orchestra struck up its opening number once again.

I can almost hear Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego saying, "O king, we really don’t want to go out there to Dura again. Because even if we did, we would not bow to the great gold statue. It’s not that we don’t respect you, it’s just that you are not God, and we bow only to God." Spiritual guts! That’s the best phrase I can think of. Intestinal fortitude and courage born of spiritual integrity, all of which translated into a resounding, "No, king, we just can’t do that." And with their final refusal, they told the king they were prepared to be led into the fiery furnace.

We Christians today need to appreciate the resolute spirit of these young men: They were not arrogant before the king. The Hebrews did not equivocate or evade the issue. They spoke their minds as children of God. How many times have we kept our allegiance to Jesus under wraps, saying, along with Peter, "I never knew the man!?" Not so for these

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<sup>24</sup> Dake’s Study Notes, Dake’s Study Bible

young men. They spoke the truth without fear, knowing what would happen if the king refused to change his mind.

These three young Hebrews were prepared to abide by the rules, even if it meant suffering as a consequence. Only God knows how many millions of other faithful followers throughout history have gone to their own "fiery furnaces" or "lions' dens" for their faith—including the torture and persecution that continues to exist throughout our world today for all modern-day Shadrachs, Meshachs, and Abed-negos.

The die was now cast. The young Hebrews admitted that they were guilty as charged. They felt no need to justify their position because they knew God would protect and defend them. But note one of the most amazing verses in this entire passage: But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up" (3:18). Imagine the maturity and faith of three young men who could say, "King, even if our God does not deliver us from your fiery furnace, we still will not serve your gods or worship your desert statue. We just will not do it!"<sup>25</sup>

**If it be so**—Thou mayest cast us into the furnace; the terror of it has no effect on our minds to induce us to alter the resolution we have taken, nor shall the fire change our purpose. We serve a God who is able to deliver us. Should he not, we are equally determined; but we are satisfied that in some way or other he will deliver us out of thy hand. Thy power cannot affect us in the kingdom of our God to which we shall ascend from thy furnace, should he permit the fire to kindle upon us. "Render to Caesar the things which are Caesar's," is a maxim of Jesus Christ; but when Caesar arrogates to himself the things that are the Lord's, then, and in such cases, his authority is to be resisted. God does not desire Caesar's things; Caesar's must not have the things of God.<sup>26</sup>

### **Daniel 3:18**

**But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.**

The response of the three Hebrews may at first seem to be too abrupt and even disrespectful. Up yours O King!

Cf. Faithful "remnant": Isa 1:9; Rom 11:5. Ps 2:5; Rev 7:14.

"Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him: but I will maintain mine own ways before Him." Job 13:15 Also, Acts 4:19.

"Our God is a consuming fire" Heb 12:29; Deut 4:24.

The king had raised the issue—who was able to deliver these three? They responded that they need not give Nebuchadnezzar any answer because he was not their deliverer. They need not make their defense to him. He could not deliver them and this is why they could not bow down to his golden image. God was their Deliverer. He had proven so at the Exodus, and afterward He commanded His people not to bow down to any image.

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<sup>25</sup> A Message of Hope from Dr. Jack Van Impe, Commentary on The Book of Daniel, Van Impe

<sup>26</sup> Adam Clarke's Commentary

The God of the Jews was their Deliverer. He was able to deliver them from the fiery furnace. They did not presume that He was going to do so. He could if in His sovereignty, He chose to do so. The statement which follows is significant: “He will deliver us out of your hand.”

The confidence of these three comes not from any personal assurance of deliverance from the furnace, but from God’s promise to the captives of Babylon that He would deliver them from captivity and restore them as a nation:

*Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, “Thus says the Lord God of Israel, ‘Like these good figs, so I will regard as good the captives of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans. For I will set My eyes on them for good, and I will bring them again to this land; and I will build them up and not overthrow them, and I will plant them and not pluck them up, and I will give them a heart to know Me for I am the Lord; and they will be My people, and I will be their God, for they will return to Me with their whole heart (Jeremiah 24:4-7, see also Deuteronomy 30:1-10; Jeremiah 27:22; 29:10-14; 32:36-38).*

Whatever happens to them personally, God has promised to deliver and restore His people. Their hope is in God, their Deliverer. One thing is non-negotiable: they will not bow down to this image.

There is a strong note of irony here. The Jewish captives of Babylon are in bondage because of their idolatry (see Isaiah 2; 30:19-22; 31:7; Jeremiah 8:19; Ezekiel 5:1-12; 6:1-10; 14:1-5; 16:15-23; 20:39-40; 22:1-4; 23). Israel was commanded not to make or worship idols, on penalty of death. Until their Babylonian captivity, they persisted in their idolatry. Idolatry was one of the reasons for their being in Babylon.<sup>27</sup>

**Evil and Suffering, Endurance**—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego believed God was able to deliver them from the fiery furnace. If God chose not to deliver them, they would still remain faithful to Him. God did deliver them (vv. 24-27), but their faith was not based on expectation of a miracle. Similarly, our faith in God is based on His basic character, not the absence or presence of suffering. God is able to relieve our suffering, but sometimes we will not experience miraculous divine intervention. God may choose to sustain us in the midst of our difficulty rather than removing the problem.<sup>28</sup>

### **Daniel 3:19**

**Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: *therefore* he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated.**

Seven times?...

We can almost see the redness of Nebuchadnezzar’s face when he hears these men will not obey this command, even if it means the furnace. Thousands of his subjects must have been listening and looking on. The orchestra was set, ready to play once again. All

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<sup>27</sup> Robert Deffinbaugh, deffinbaugh@bible.org, Biblical Studies Press, 1995

<sup>28</sup> Disciple’s Study Bible

of Babylon's political leaders were assembled, ready to bow down once again. The masses stood by too, ready to bow as well. Only these three Hebrews would not bow down.

Nebuchadnezzar was so hot, he commanded that the furnace be fired even hotter. This furnace may have been a brick-kiln, perhaps used in making the base for the golden image. The top was like a chimney, where smoke from the fire could escape. It could serve a second purpose as well—offenders could be cast into the fire by being thrown down from above. At the bottom there was a door or hole through which fuel could be added and air for combustion introduced.<sup>29</sup>

**[full of fury]** When the king, full of rage, commanded the furnace to be heated seven times hotter than usual, he only magnified God all the more (Daniel 3:19,25-28). In "The Song of the Three Holy Children" of the Apocrypha it is stated that the servants of Nebuchadnezzar kept throwing "rosin, pitch, tow, and small wood; so that the flame streamed forth above the furnace forty-nine cubits." This was 73 feet 6 inches. The fire was so hot that it killed those putting the men in the furnace (Daniel 3:22).<sup>30</sup>

### **Daniel 3:20**

**And he commanded the most mighty men that *were* in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, *and* to cast *them* into the burning fiery furnace.**

### **Daniel 3:21**

**Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their *other* garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.**

**[coats]** Cloaks or mantles.

**[hosen]** Aramaic: *pattiysh* (H6361), fine outer garment. Hosen is obsolete.

**[hats]** The turban. The only place where the word is used in Scripture. Herodotus (who lived 100 years after Daniel) said that the dress of the Babylonians consisted of a tunic of linen reaching down to the feet over which was a woolen tunic and over all a white short cloak or mantle. On their heads they wore turbans. One translated reads, "in their cloaks, their turbans, and their upper (woolen) tunics, and their under (linen) tunics." All this should have caught fire quickly but instead there was not even the smell of smoke on them when they came out (Daniel 3:27).

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<sup>29</sup> Robert Deffinbaugh, deffinbaugh@bible.org, Biblical Studies Press, 1995

<sup>30</sup> Dake's Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible



### **Daniel 3:22**

**Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.**

Were the officers killed in backdraft?

### **Daniel 3:23**

**And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.**

The three Hebrews, bound tightly and still in their festive dress, had to be carried to the furnace and then thrown in. The fire was so intensely hot that those charged with the unpleasant task of throwing the men into the fire were consumed by the flames which belched from the furnace. These three men did not stand a "prayer of a chance," unless their God was able to deliver them. They were cast into the top of the furnace, bound hand and foot.

### **Daniel 3:24**

**Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king.**

The king's vantage point must have afforded him a view of the furnace from below so that he could look into the flames through the bottom door where fuel and air were introduced. With utter amazement, the king looked inside. He was astonished! While the executioners were slain by the flames, the three Hebrews were not. They were walking about inside the furnace. Their bonds had been loosed, but the flames did them no harm.

### **Daniel 3:25**

**He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.**

*Bar elahin*, son of the gods (Aramaic); *Elohim* is always plural!  
"Angel" of v. 28. Theophany. Walking around loose!

Something else puzzled Nebuchadnezzar. There were not three men walking about in that furnace, but four. More troubling was that the fourth person in the furnace was not like the other three. The king turned to his high officials, who were looking on. He asked them if there were not three men cast into the fire. They wisely agreed. He called their attention to the fact that four men were now in the fire, and one had a god-like appearance. Whatever that appearance was, he knew it was not human and assumed it to be divine.

### **Van Impe: The Fourth Man in the Fire**

Nebuchadnezzar didn't retreat to his private quarters to wait for an official report on the demise of the three Hebrew children later in the day. He sat there in rapt attention, eagerly watching what his decree would do to anyone who refused to bow to his image. The king was not prepared for what he was about to encounter. Scripture says that he jumped up, astonished at what he saw.

As he did, he asked his high officials what was certainly a logical question: "Didn't we just put three men into the furnace? Why then do I see four men—all unhurt? Are my eyes playing tricks on me? And look. . . no one is bound. Didn't I see you tying them up? Then, why aren't they on fire? This makes no sense. They're still walking around as if nothing happened. But what's really got me confused is that fourth man. Who is he? How did he get in there?"

Perhaps the most telling comment of all comes from the mouth of the king when he says, "the form of the fourth is like the Son of God" (3:25). A more accurate translation of what the king said would be "like a son of the gods." The Babylonians believed that their gods had progeny, so Nebuchadnezzar was commenting on what he thought was a supernatural being in the fire—the fourth man—a son of one of the Babylonian deities. Still unwilling to admit that the one true God might be involved in this miracle, the king continues to credit pagan deities for this bewildering turn of events.<sup>31</sup>

**[the Son of God]** There is no definite article in the original language, so it reads, "a son of God," that is, an angel or a superhuman being. Nebuchadnezzar could not have known the N.T. revelation of the Son of God who was born of God and Mary (Matthew 1:18-23; Luke 1:35; Hebrews 1:5-7). He himself acknowledged the being was an angel in Daniel 3:28.<sup>32</sup>

**Is like the Son of God**—A most improper translation. What notion could this idolatrous king have of the Lord Jesus Christ? For so the place is understood by thousands. *Bar elahin* signifies a son of the gods, that is, a Divine person or angel; and so the king calls him in verse 28: "God hath sent his ANGEL, and delivered his servants." And though even from this some still contend that it was the Angel of the covenant, yet the Babylonish king knew just as much of the one as he did of the other. No other ministrations were necessary; a single angel from heaven was quite sufficient to answer this purpose, as that which stopped the mouths of the lions when Daniel was cast into their den.<sup>33</sup>

It was obvious to those watching that this fourth person was supernatural. We cannot be certain who the fourth man was. It could have been an angel or a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ. In either case, God sent a heavenly visitor to accompany these faithful men during their time of great trial.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> A Message of Hope from Dr. Jack Van Impe, Commentary on The Book of Daniel, Van Impe

<sup>32</sup> Dake's Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

<sup>33</sup> Adam Clarke's Commentary

<sup>34</sup> Life Application Notes

### **Daniel 3:26**

**Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come *hither*. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, came forth of the midst of the fire.**

Drawing near to the door of the furnace, Nebuchadnezzar called into the flames, telling the men to come out. He referred to these men not only by name, but also as “servants of the Most High God.” This was perhaps motivated by the fourth man in the fire. Fortunately for the king and the rest, the fourth person did not come out with the other three.

The king and his officials now witnessed the full extent of the miracle God had performed in their sight. Neither the clothing nor the bodies of the men had been harmed by the intense heat and the flames. Their hair had not been singed; their clothing was not damaged. There was not even the smell of smoke to be detected. Their deliverance could not have been more complete. The only thing they lost in those flames were the ropes which bound them.<sup>35</sup>

**[servants of the most high God]** The three Jews had claimed to serve the true and living God (Daniel 3:17), so now the king recognized them as true servants of the Most High God.

### **Daniel 3:27**

**And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king’s counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them.**

Many of God’s servants never know the fullness of spiritual liberty till they are cast into the midst of the furnace. Go into the furnace. Christ is in the furnace with you.

Though the smell of fire had not passed on them, it must have left a glow on their countenances and a glory on their persons which we find nowhere else. Henceforth they are called “the three holy children.”

**[saw these men]** They were examined carefully by all the great men of Babylon who were witnesses of this great miracle.

#### **Four miraculous things:**

1. Their bodies were immune to fire.
2. No hair of their head was singed.
3. Their garments were not burned.
4. No smell of smoke was upon them.

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<sup>35</sup> Robert Deffinbaugh, deffinbaugh@bible.org, Biblical Studies Press, 1995

### **Daniel 3:28**

***Then* Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed *be* the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.**

**[Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego]** Nebuchadnezzar was at least a man to recognize superiority. He always acknowledged God when His power was manifested (Daniel 2:47; Daniel 3:28; Daniel 4:34).

**[sent his angel]** This explains the "son of God" idea expressed by the king who believed in many gods and many offspring of gods. To him any kind of supernatural being would be the offspring of a god.

**[angel]** Five things that Nebuchadnezzar confessed:

1. that God has sent His angel.
2. that God delivers those who trust in Him.
3. that God made him change his word.
4. that the Jews offered to give up their lives in order to be true to their God.
5. that there is no other God that can deliver after this sort (Daniel 3:29).

### **Daniel 3:29**

**Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort.**

Whoops! The rivals' plot had backfired! Nebuchadnezzar is a mover and a shaker.

**[decree]** A decree against any word of slander against God is rare.

**Speak any thing amiss**—Though by the decree the king does not oblige the people to worship the true God, yet he obliges them to treat him with reverence.

**[cut in pieces]** This was one mode of death in both Babylon and Medo-Persia (Daniel 2:5; Daniel 3:29; Ezra 6:11).

### **Daniel 3:30**

**Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the province of Babylon.**

**[promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego]** This was the second promotion for the three Hebrew companions of Daniel (Daniel 2:49; Daniel 3:30).

Before we consider the words Nebuchadnezzar spoke at the end of Daniel 3, let us recall what we have read at the beginning of the chapter. Nebuchadnezzar had planned to further his kingdom by assembling a large crowd, all of whom would bow in worship to an image he had made. Men had to choose between bowing down to the idol or being burned in the flames of the furnace. The “god” represented by this idol was to be honored and worshipped. Those who resisted were to be destroyed. Yet Nebuchadnezzar’s final words are praise and adoration for these three “rebels,” who refused to bow down, and for the God whom they served, even to death.

This day’s events had not turned out the way the king had planned. He intended to turn the nation to worship his idol. That failed. He planned to subordinate all worship to this “god.” That failed, too. All of the energy and expense to produce worship of a false god was to no avail, and the king fell to his knees before the God of Israel.

His question, asked only moments before, “What god is there who can deliver you out of my hands?” is now answered by the king who asked it. Nebuchadnezzar blessed the God of these three Hebrews, as the God who had delivered them from death. He praised them for their faithfulness in obeying their God, even unto death. Significantly, the king praised these men for their exclusive (monotheistic) worship of their God. Unlike the rest, they were not willing to serve any other god in addition to the one God they worshipped and served.

The king’s decree goes beyond praise. It declares punishment for any who interfere with the free worship of the Jews. Nebuchadnezzar tried to interfere with the religion of the Jews. Their God had intervened and delivered them from the king’s wrath. Now the king seeks to insure this will not happen again. Anyone, the king declared, who so much as speaks against the worship of these men will be torn limb from limb and their property confiscated. All this because no other God had shown himself able to deliver as their God had done.<sup>36</sup>

### **The Missing Element: Where’s Daniel?**

Why wasn’t Daniel in the furnace?

- Daniel yielded to the king’s challenge? Not likely.
- Daniel was exempted from accusation by his enemies? Not likely.
- Daniel had been removed from the situation (*on an errand for the king?*) Daniel’s absence may have been viewed as his rival’s opportunity... Absent on affair of state? Istanbul prism: lists 3; but no mention of Daniel!<sup>37</sup>

Daniel isn't mentioned at all in this chapter. He would never have bowed to the image, so we have to conclude that he wasn't there. In the same way, the Church won't be here when the Great Tribulation comes upon the earth. We'll view it from heaven, where we will be with Christ. The tribulation we face as Christians comes from Satan and the world under his control. He constantly seeks to attack us and tear us down. The Great Tribulation predicted in Revelation 6-19 will come from God as His judgment on the world that has rejected His Son.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Robert Deffinbaugh, [deffinbaugh@bible.org](mailto:deffinbaugh@bible.org), Biblical Studies Press, 1995

<sup>37</sup> Chuck Missler, Study Notes, Commentary on Daniel, Khouse.Org

<sup>38</sup> Chuck Smith Sermon Notes, Calvary Chapel, Costa Mesa, California

### **Van Impe: The Flaming Flame Will Not Be Quenched**

Again, this is more than just a story. The deeper meaning of this passage—and of this entire chapter—is this: During the Tribulation period the false prophet will set up an image of the Antichrist and make people bow to it. If they do not worship the image, they will be put to death. During that same Tribulation period the entire world will become a fiery furnace. Psalm 97:3 says, "*A fire goeth before him.*" Ezekiel 20:47 reads, "The flaming flame shall not be quenched." Zephaniah 1:18 tells us, "*The whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy.*" Malachi 4:1 reads, "*The day cometh that shall burn as an oven.*"

The Great Tribulation is going to be a horrendous time for earth's inhabitants. But remember . . . the three Hebrew children went through their fiery trial unscathed. Their clothes were left intact, and not even a hair on their heads was singed. There was no smell of fire or smoke on their bodies—all a dramatic picture of the remnant of Jews who are going to be spared during the Tribulation hour as well as millions of newly converted Christians. God always has, and always will, have a way of protecting His own. There is a terrible time coming. Jeremiah 30:7 says,

*"Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it."*

That's the good news. In Daniel 12:1 we also read:

*"There shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book."*

Yes, this will be a time of great difficulty for the Jews. But there are also two great statements of encouragement: "*they shall be saved out of it*" and "*thy people shall be delivered.*" Jesus said in Matthew 24:22,

*"And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened."*

This is a key verse because of the word *elect*. Some Christians believe the Church will be compelled to endure the Tribulation hour because the *elect* are present. But it's important to determine which group of "elect" God has in mind. The elect group mentioned here is that group meeting on the Sabbath day, in synagogues, and fleeing from Judea to the mountains of Petra. This cannot be a reference to Christians, but rather to the Jewish elect, referred to in Isaiah 42:1, 45:4, 65:9, and 65:22. *Yahweh* is speaking here about His wife Israel. They are going to be spared the wrath of the Tribulation period, and this is what the Hebrew children represent and, essentially, what the entire chapter portrays.

Now, as we move on to chapter four of the Book of Daniel, will we continue to encounter a hostile, volatile King Nebuchadnezzar? Or will we begin to see some permanent changes in his attitude toward Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego and to the one whom he now admits to be the true God? I think you'll be amazed—not only at how the drama unfolds, but how chapter four takes us another step closer to the further unsealing of final end-time mysteries.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> A Message of Hope from Dr. Jack Van Impe, Commentary on The Book of Daniel, Van Impe